
Farnborough-90 International Air Show

by

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FARNBOROUGH

Farnborough is a village in the English countryside, of approximately 45,000 people located nearly 30 miles west-southwest of central London. Like so many other towns within a reasonable (or sometimes unreasonable) commuting distance from that great metropolis, Farnborough serves London as a bedroom community, pouring its residents on to the trains, buses, and motorways toward the city center each workday morning and receiving them home again after a day of toil.

There are, of course, many local characteristics that make Farnborough unique among the area communities. Its particular location, specific accesses to road and rail facilities, and unique regional history are just a few. However, the most prominent feature that marks Farnborough, is the presence there of Britain's Royal Aerospace Establishment, or RAE Farnborough, a research activity of the United Kingdom (UK) Ministry of Defence. The activities and accomplishments of RAE have brought worldwide attention, and drawn prominent international aviation personages to Farnborough since World War II.

Many ties between defense research organizations and the UK's aerospace industry have naturally been formed and nurtured during the decades of the cold war. The one that brings the most money, people, and fame to Farnborough is the agreement that enables the industry's trade association, the Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC) to organize and produce an International Air Show at Farnborough every other year, in even numbered years. This schedule alternates with the Paris Air Show, held in odd numbered years, thereby making Farnborough and Paris alternate hosts of Europe's major air shows.



SBAC is the British aerospace industry's designated coordinator, advocate, cheerleader, and spokesperson. The chairman of SBAC, Mr. Sydney Gillibrand, is also president of British Aerospace or BAe, Britain's primary aircraft manufacturer. One of the ways that the industry's wares can best be promoted is by their prominent display in an environment that captures the attention of the world's aviation customers. This is the task assumed by SBAC every other year, using the resources of many British organizations to support its efforts at RAE Farnborough.

THE FARNBOROUGH AIR SHOW

“Farnborough International '90”, the official name of this year's show, took place September 3rd through September 9th (September 2 was a press day). Before September 7th, attendance was limited to official industry, government, and press representatives. The flying display and exhibition halls were opened to the general public on the seventh.

The physical preparations for the air show began in earnest in April when structures were erected on the permanent foundations of the halls and many of the chalets. By July, space had been allocated to the various national groups (other countries' counterparts of SBAC) and major aerospace companies, and the principal features of the show were briefed to the international press. Individual corporations and national industry groups were deciding what to bring, how to display it, and how to advertise and entertain. Chalet and booth space was allocated and the flying program planned and scheduled.

Support activities, hotels, restaurants, transportation facilities, and the news media were all making their final arrangements for Farnborough. Embassy staffs were hustling to accommodate distinguished visitors and to plan receptions, in addition to attending to the business of supporting the international business aspects of the air show.

The Royal Air Force (RAF) committed its noted aerobatic team, the Red Arrows, and was practicing a synchronized maneuver for demonstrations of the STOL/VTOL Harrier combat aircraft. Several planes were selected to be on the display line, drawing upon the RAF heritage to weave Farnborough into the massive national celebration of the 50th Anniversary of the Battle of Britain. The Ministry of Defence made the location available along with the pledge to provide primary security for the compound with the Ministry of Defence Police Force.

The Defence Export Services Organisation (DESO) endeavored to schedule as many visiting potential clients into the British Chalets as possible. British Embassies and High Commissions from around the world dispatched their air attachés with their host defence ministry and air force dignitaries home to England to converse with UK officials, see a bit of London, and, naturally, attend the show. Among the many evening social events held in London in conjunction with the show, Her Majesty's Government Reception was planned in the magnificent government hospitality center of Lancaster House, St. James.

This year's Farnborough air show had many features that differed from previous shows. The Ministry of Defence set up facilities for other European governments to advise their companies at the show on matters of sales and procurement policies. Another “first” was the display on the flight line of a Hungarian MiG-21 which was given to the RAF Benevolent Fund by the government of Hungary, and auctioned off on September 13, with the proceeds designated for the general support of RAF Battle of Britain survivors.

The United States presence at Farnborough was substantial and was conducted on several levels of effort:

- The McDonnell Douglas MD530N (NOTAR) helicopter, General Dynamics F-16, Lake Turbo Renegade, McDonnell Douglas F-18 (actually CAF CF-18) and Sikorsky S76 helicopters were all scheduled for flight demonstrations.
- Twenty-one U.S.-origin aircraft including the ones noted in the flying program, were originally scheduled to be on static display according to the SBAC Press Information guide. Of these, nine were military aircraft. Not all of the 21 mustered on the flight line. One of the missing aircraft was the AH-64 Apache helicopter. McDonnell Douglas claimed that its most effective

advertisement was the vacant space for the helicopter, marked by a sign which read "called to duty." Also, there was much speculation as to the "real reason" the F-117A was not shown after preliminary announcements that it would be. *Aviation Week and Space Technology* in its September 3, 1990, edition stated that the appearance was "not scheduled" due to "its deployment to the Gulf."

The McGraw Hill *Official Directory of U.S. Exhibitors* listed twenty seven American companies as occupying chalets or private offices/apartments at the show. (The Farnborough *Trade Catalog* showed a total of 123 companies and organizations.) Four of the U.S. companies listed gave UK addresses (and/or had the British "Ltd." after their title rather than the U.S. "Inc." or "Corp.") At least one company appeared to be a U.S. subsidiary of a foreign corporation. Most of the major aircraft manufacturers made arrangements for individual private chalets.

Companies and other exhibitors that did not obtain a private chalet, set up exhibits in one of the four large exhibition halls set up for the show. There were about 170 U.S. enterprises represented in these exhibit halls:

- 23 had chalets as well
- 70 participated in the "USA Pavilion" effort
- 7 were U.S. Government, State, or local government agencies

The "USA Pavilion" at Farnborough '90 was not a dedicated building, but rather a grouping of U.S. displays coordinated by American Aerospace Industries, Inc. (AAI). AAI is a private U.S. company that promotes U.S. aerospace and defense related industry exports. It works primarily in conjunction with international exhibitors and trade missions, but also explores other arrangements to promote its clients' products.

The larger U.S. aerospace companies generally run their own displays at Farnborough and other major shows. A "U.S. Pavilion" effort such as this one run by AAI gives the smaller vendors a chance to display their products and make contacts as a part of a larger, more publicized effort and, at a lesser cost than if they would make their own arrangements directly with the show authorities. AAI managed the USA Pavilion effort at the show under contractual obligation of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

As a final U.S. level of effort, companies and other organizations that do not choose to have their own booth at the show, can register with the U.S. Department of Commerce Aerospace Product Information Center (APIC). APIC had a single booth as part of the USA Pavilion. The Center provided literature and videotapes from over 70 organizations and companies to interested visitors, and helped to establish contacts between interested parties.

AIR SHOWS

Farnborough, Paris, Dayton, Abbotsford, Singapore, Hannover. The air shows of the 1980s and 1990 have had much in common. They generally consisted of the following elements:

- A daily flying program consisting of military, commercial, general aviation, and demonstration fixed-wing and rotary-wing aircraft.
- Lines of static display - aircraft and other aerospace related hardware.

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- Chalets or corporate condominiums where invited guests are greeted, given more specific and personalized presentations, wined, dined, and often invited to view the flying show. Appointments, meetings, and negotiations may take place in these chalets. A typical chalet would consist of: a guarded entrance and reception/identification area, a foyer or lobby with nearby bar, luncheon room with buffet and/or sit-down service, small private conference rooms and offices, and a viewing section.
 - Exhibition Halls containing many small booths where initial contacts are made, small souvenir items are given out, small specialty and component companies display their unique products, and television or other visual medium demonstrations are shown.
 - Related evening events such as receptions, hospitality suites, dinners, and nights on the town usually held in the nearby major city (i.e., London, Paris, Dayton, Vancouver). The major corporations may host nightly hospitality suites. The receptions are generally arranged and hosted by the sponsoring governments, national aerospace industries, and other organizations. At a part of Farnborough-90, the authors attended two receptions held in the American Embassy in London, one hosted by *Defense News*, and one hosted by the American League for Exports and Security Assistance (ALESA), as well as the British Government reception described earlier in this article.

Most air shows represent a national industry effort to draw worldwide attention to its products. Hence, the air show is usually sponsored by the appropriate association. As mentioned in the opening section, the Society of British Aerospace Companies (SBAC) produces the Farnborough show.

In Paris, the Bourget Air Show is the responsibility of *Le Groupement des Industries Francaises Aeronautiques et Spatiales* (GIFAS), the Association of French Aeronautical and Space Industries. GIFAS exists to support the French aerospace industry in a number of ways. Among them are:

- Acting as a prime contractor in major French programs.
- Promoting the image of the industry in France and abroad.
- Coordinating the French exhibits at other air shows.
- Organizing and running the Paris Air Show.

Some other major national industrial organizations present at Farnborough-90 were:

- Aerospace Industries Association of Canada, AIAC
- German Aerospace Industries Association, BDLI
- Aerospace Industries Association [Italy], AIA
- Society of Japanese Aerospace Companies, SJAC

The United States Air and Trade Show at Dayton this year was sponsored by the Dayton Area chamber of Commerce and by the City of Dayton Department of Aviation with support from the Ohio Department of Development, Division of Travel and Tourism and with approval of the U.S. Department of Commerce.

AIR SHOW 1990

For the corporate players at Farnborough, the quite serious purpose of the air show is the same as it has been since demonstration flying began, and that is to market their products and services. The pursuit of that goal in the UK in the year 1990 required that considerable attention be devoted to current market characteristics which are vastly different from the environment of the late 70's and early 80's.

Today, the international government consortium, corporation, end item, and market efforts are the norm. Thus, to sell in Europe, an American corporation must consummate deals with European governments, must create partnerships with its European counterpart countries, and must let contracts to offset the prices with purchases from European industry.

International dealings dominated the air shows this year. A representative listing of some of the major transactions and the great range of geography and products involved includes:

- SSBJ Gulfstream-Sukhoi supersonic business jet (under development); USA (Gulfstream) and USSR (Sukhoi)
- IAR-99 trainer/fighter; Romania brokered by the USA (Jaffe Aircraft Corporation)
- Skynet 4C military communications satellite; UK (Marconi) launched on the French Ariane shuttle
- CBA 123 regional airliner under development by Argentina (FMA) and Brazil (Embraer).
- Memorandum of Understanding concerning possible joint projects in electronic equipment between the USA (Westinghouse) and Poland (RADWAR)
- RTM 322 engine on Kamov KA-62R helicopter; UK (Rolls-Royce), France (Turbomeca) and USSR (Kamov)
- Project definition design inputs for a supersonic light combat aircraft; France (Dassault) and India (HAL)
- Proposed sale of de Havilland Aircraft Company; Canada (de Havilland) and USA (Boeing, current owner) to France (Aerospatiale) and Italy (Aeritalia)
- Advanced Amphibian Aircraft (AAA) development; Italy (Aeritalia), Germany (Dornier), Greece (HAI), Denmark (Per Udsem), and Yugoslavia (SKO).
- Establishment of Aeroflot refueling base at Shannon, Ireland and joint Irish-Russian operated duty free shops in the Soviet Union; Ireland(Aer Rianta) and USSR.

On the surface, air shows are large, costly, exciting, and exhilarating affairs, which combine the objectives of marketing and industry promotion. The additional agenda of international cooperation, technology exchange, and research development may not be as obvious, but in many cases may be just as important. Many of the intangible benefits of the air show extravaganzas can not be measured in monetary terms—the bottom line. However, in the current austere times for the military aerospace industry, many military exhibitors are reevaluating their levels of participation in the air shows as revenue generating activities. Future air shows may reflect the effects of reduced military budgets and decreasing sales.

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